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STUDIES IN THE JEWISH LITURGY.

"THEY who write down prayers are as they who burn the Torah." So runs a principle¹ that found acceptance in the early days of Judaism until the close of the Talmud (500 C.E.). From the point of view of the history of religion this is truly an admirable injunction, for the prohibition to write down prayers retained for the service its naturalness and spontaneity, preserved it as worship of the heart (עבודה שבלב), and left ample scope for the momentary mood and free expression of feeling. Yet, from the point of view of the historian of literature, this conception is greatly to be regretted, as it held its ground not only in theory, but was also carried into actual practice. Prayers were in point of fact not written down. From the whole of the first thousand years after the Babylonian Exile not a single congregational prayer has been handed down to us in its original wording.

For the student of Jewish Liturgy the range of sources is even narrower and more difficult of access than that open to the searcher in the realm of general early Jewish literature. Moreover, we have to bewail severe losses from the period in which prayers were ultimately committed to writing.

For it is clear that in the course of a history extending over 1,000 years much material, and that not always of the least worth, must perish; and we are here face to face with

¹ כהני ברכות כשורפי תורה, *Shabbath*, 115 b.

the fact that *one whole branch* of the liturgy has been lost. The course of historical development was such that the Babylonian Academies became the final authorities in every province of religious life for the whole Jewish people; and only those Jewish traditions were preserved that were transmitted through them. Thus it was that, although the synagogue service was first developed in Palestine and it there evolved its first technics and terminology, *the Palestinian ritual* with its characteristic features fell a victim to time. Isolated and scanty remains will have to be used to restore it.

These two facts—that the oldest liturgies have not been preserved, and that those that have been preserved have all been transmitted through the Babylonian medium—have left their impress on the history. Later authorities, owing to lack of adequate sources, were often unable to find their way aright, and therefore spread conceptions which are out of keeping with the sense of the original sources. When, at the request of the “Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums,” I undertook detailed studies in the history of the liturgy, the conviction forced itself upon me that before a consecutive presentation is possible, some fundamental conceptions of the liturgy needed fuller examination and discussion. These investigations I hope to present in a series of articles, and to supplement them by a discussion of manuscript variations in our principal prayers (*Stammgebete*).

I. פֶּרֶם עַל שְׁמַע.

A.

The first act of the daily morning prayers that the oldest traditional literature mentions is פֶּרֶם עַל שְׁמַע. The *Mišna Megilla*, IV, 5, prescribes that this act requires the presence of ten adult co-religionists: אֵין פּוֹרְסִין עַל שְׁמַע¹; and goes on to particularize who

¹ The text varies. The Pesaro edition and Maimuni always write

is qualified to act as פורס על שמע and who not. The meaning of the term was in quite early times misunderstood, and the Amoraim even were unable to explain it, as they no longer knew the connection that brought about its use. We find an erroneous explanation already in *Masekhet Sof'rim*—in so far as the text is correct—where we read אין פורסין על שמע לא בישיבה ולא בעמידה (X, 7, ed. Müller, p. xvii). According to this it would speak of the possibility of a second reading of the שמע, the first before the Shemone Esre (=sitting), the second after this prayer (=standing)¹. This latter procedure is more fully explained at the end of chap. X (ed. Müller, p. xviii): ובמקום שיש שם תשעה או עשרה ששמעו בין ברכו ובין קריש ולאחר התפלה עומד אחד מאלו ויאמר ברכו או קריש וענו אחריו יצא ידי חובתו.

Another wrong view is presented in chapter XIV, 8, where פורס על שמע is brought into connection with the very late custom of reciting שמע at the taking out of the Torah. The later commentaries were written under the influence of this explanation. Raši accepts it literally, at the same time trying to account for the term פורס = "to halve," by making it apply to the reciting of only the first blessing before the Shema (besides the Kaddish).

R. Abraham b. David offers the same explanation in his comments on the Yad haḥazaḳa, whereas Maimuni refers the term to the two paragraphs יוצר אור and אהבה רבה².

The dictionaries also offer little better than this explanation, the Arukh not taking full advantage of the useful analogy that it quotes from the Targum to 1 Sam. ix. 13, where ארי הוא יפרים על כי הוא יברך הובה is reproduced as נכסתא³.

פורסן (cf. Behrens S., *Mose ben Maimūni's Mischnah-Commentar zum Tractat Megillah*, p. 20). Further, the Pesaro, Venice, and Constantinople editions and the editions of the Mišna read פורס. Cf. Müller, *Masekhet Sof'rim*, p. 190.

¹ The modern Sephardic custom of repeating ברכו at the end of the service is similar.

² ה' הפלה, VIII, 5. *Mišna Commentary*, l. c.

³ Vid. פורס, 8; for the text cf. Levy, *Targum-Wörterb.*, II, 293, פורס.

Now all the explanations here adduced are *untenable*, since they contradict the unanimous use of the term in the old sources. In the first place in the *Mišna* itself, among the regulations for the service, those of **פרס על שמע** always receive first mention. A glance through them suffices to show that it is not a question of an act of private devotion appended to the service, but rather of *the commencement of the congregational prayers*, of the recital of the Shema, with its accompanying paragraphs. In the Palestinian Talmud¹ also the question **מכיון דתנינן אין פורסין את שמע וליידא מילה תנינן אין עוברין לפני התיבה** implies that the *Mišna* enumerates its regulations in the order in which the parts of the service follow one another. The incident related in the Midrash, that the congregation to which Eleazar *Hisma*² was sent called upon him with the words **פרס על שמע** at the *beginning* of the service, testifies to the same fact. So also Amram's Siddur uses the expression in a similar connection, about the true meaning of which there can be no doubt. At the end of the well-known passage about the introduction of the Shema into the *Keduša* it reads: **ביון שבטלה הגזירה והיו פורסין את שמע**: שאילו מן: ³ p. 24 b. Compare further p. 11 a. (p. 11 a). **קמי רב נטרונאי גאון ז"ל הנכנס לבית הכנסת ומצא צבור מתפללין ועדיין לא קרא פסוקי דזמרה מהו שיעסקו עם הצבור בעסק שמעאם**

Jastrow (*Dictionary*), who keeps to the usual view, explains the term **פרס** from the analogy of **זרים סודרא**, *Ber.*, 51 a, "spread a cloak over the head for the recitation preceding the Shema" (cf. Migdal Oz in Maimuni, l.c.). But this custom is nowhere attested for the prayer.

¹ *J. Megilla*, IV, 4, fol. 75 a, ed. Krotschin.

² *Lev. Rabba*, sect. 23. *Cant. Rab.* to II, 2. **ר' אלעזר אול לחד אתר אמרו ליה** . . . **פרס על שמע אמר להן לינא חכם עבד לפני הריבה אמר להן לינא חכם** . . . The order of the acts of the service is the same in *Cant. Rabba*, VIII, 13: **אע"פ שישראל עסקין במלאכתן כל ששת ימים ביום השבת משכימים ובאים לבית הכנסת** ; וקורין קריה שמע ועוברין לפני הריבה וקורין בתורה ומפסיקין בגניא . . . except that here, in accordance with the later usage, the expression **קריה שמע** is used.

³ Cf. *Hal. Gedol.*, ed. Hildesheimer, p. 22, a good instance of how inexactly such passages are often cited.

וכך אמר ריש: P. 47 a: כנון שמצאם בתחלה עסק פריסת שמע מתיבתא מנהג לאחר שאוכלין וחורין . . . כיון שעומד שליה צבור לפרוס את שמע¹. All these passages speak of the chief prayer of the congregation, not of an appendix to it. פרס then is presented to us as *the old technical expression for the recital of the Shema and the blessings belonging to it*, in the congregational morning service. We include the blessings, as the saying ר' יהודה אומר כל ר' יודה ראה מאורות מימיו לא יפרוס על שמע יוצר אור at the beginning of the prayer, shows that they are comprised in the "Perisath Shema."

The question arises now, what is the origin of the term פרס, for the root-meaning of פרס is "divide," "break" (cf. Raši פורם כמו בפרוס החג פלגא RABAD, פרם לשון חצי הדבר); all derived forms and all other combinations of the root always go back to the meaning "divide," "cut in pieces." There must have been in the manner of reciting these sections something to occasion the choice of this expression. In point of fact one can follow up the inquiry into the manner of recitation of these sections from the statements of the oldest sources. In *Mišna Sota*, V, 4, the question is debated how we are to imagine the singing of the Song of Moses at the Red Sea (Exod. xv). The forcible objection to the authenticity of this song brought by Higher Criticism, that a large multitude of people at a low standard of culture could not suddenly break out into such a long and artistic poem, was also felt by the early Rabbis, and they sought to master the problem in various ways. Three analogies were drawn into comparison from the daily religious life. The account of the *Mišna* is but short, that of the *Baraita* more detailed. We have it in three recensions; no one of these offers a wholly correct text,

¹ In the Responsum of Natronai's שיערי חשבוה, No. 9, חשבוה הנאותים, ed. Lyck, No. 83, there is still some recollection of the fact that the פרס על שמע is not the ordinary reader; but no clear definition is there given, nor of the יורד לפני ההיבה. I hope to return to the latter in a special article.

but they all contribute towards amending the text. We set them out here side by side:

I.

Tosefta Sota, VI, 2, 3, ed.
Zuckerm. p. 303, l. 16 seq.

דרש ר' עקיב' בשעה שעלו
ישר' מן הים שרת עליהן רוח
הקודש ואמרו שירה כקמן
שהוא קורא את ההלל בבית
הסופר ועונין אחריו על כל
עינין ועינין משה אומ'
אשירה לי וישר' אומ' אשירה
לי: משה אומ' עזי וזמרת
יה וישר' אומ' עזי וזמרת
יה ר' אליעזר בנו של ר'
יוסי הגלילי אומ' כגדול
שהוא מקרא את ההלל בבית
הכנסת ועונין אחריו עינין
ראשון משה אומ' אשירה
לי וישר' אומ' אשירה לי
משה אומ' עזי וזמרת יה
וישר' אומ' עזי וזמרת יה
ר' נחמיה אומ' בבני אדם
שקוראין את שמע שנ' ויאמרו
לאמר מלמד שהיה משה
פותח תחילה וישר' אומרין
אחריו וגומרין משה אומ' אז
ישיר משה וישר' אומ'
אשירה לי משה אומ'
עזי וזמרת יה וישר' או' זה
אלי ואנוהו משה אומ' יי
איש מלחמה וישר' אומ' יי
שמו:

II.

Jer. Sota, V, 6, ed.
Krotoschin, fol. 20 c.

בו ביום דרש רבי עקיבה
אז ישיר משה וגו'. לקמן
שהוא מקרא את ההלל בבית
הספר והן עונין אחריו על כל
דבר ודבר. משה אמר
אשירה והן עונין אחריו
אשירה. משה אמר עוזי
והן אומרי' עוזי. ר' אליעזר
בנו של ר' יוסי הגלילי אומר
לגדול שהוא מקרא את ההלל
בבית הכנס' והן עונין אחריו
דבר ראשון. משה אמר
אשיר' והן עונין אשירה.
משה אמר עזי והן עונין
אחריו אשירה מה
ת"ל לאמר רבי אבהו בשם
ר' יוסי בי ר' חנניה כהדין
פסוק' משה אמר אשיר' והן
עונין אחריו אשירה לי
כי נאה נאה סוס ורובבו
רמה בים. משה אמר עזי
וזמרת. והן עונין אחריו עזי
וזמרת יה:

III.

Babli Sota, 30 b (cf.
Tosaf., ib. s.v. רבי נחמיה).

ת"ר בו ביום דרש רבי
עקיבא בשעה שעלו ישראל
מן הים נתנו עיניהם לומר
שירה וכיצד אמרו שירה
כגדול המקרא את הלל והן
עונין אחריו ראשי פרקים
משה אמר אשירה לה' והן
אומרים אשירה לה' משה
אמר כי נאה נאה והן
אומרים אשירה לה' רבי
אליעזר בנו של רבי יוסי
הגלילי אומר כקמן המקרא
את הלל והן עונין אחריו
כל מה שהוא אומר משה
אמר אשירה לה' והן אומרים
אשירה לה' משה אמר כי
נאה נאה והן אומרים כי
נאה נאה רבי נחמיה אומר
כסופר הפורס על שמע בבית
הכנסת שהוא פותח תחלה
והן עונין אחריו

The analogies adduced are drawn (1) from the method of teaching children in the schools; (2) from the recital of the Hallel in the synagogue; and (3) from the reading of the Shema in the synagogue. We gather from the three sources approximately the following text for the Baraita: בו ביום דרש ר' עקיבא בשעה שעלו ישראל מן הים נתנו עיניהם לומר שירה וכיצד אמרו שירה כקמן שהוא קורא את ההלל בבית הספר שהסופר פותח והן עונין אחריו על כל ענין וענין משה אומר אשירה לך והן עונין אחריו אשירה לך משה אומר עזי וזמרת יה והן עונין אחריו עזי וזמרת יה * ר' אליעזר בנו של ר' יוסי הגלילי אומר כגדול שמקרא את ההלל בבית הכנסת שהוא פותח והן עונין אחריו ענין ראשון משה אומ' אשירה לך וישר' אומר' אשירה לך משה אומר עזי וזמרת יה וישראל אומרים אשירה לך * ר' נחמיה אומר רוח הקדש שרתה על ישראל ואמרו שירה כבני אדם הפורסין על שמע בבית הכנסת שנ' ויאמרו לאמר מלמד שהיה משה פותח תחילה וישר' אומרין אחריו וגומרין משה אומר אז ישיר משה וישראל אומרים אשירה לך משה אומר עזי וזמרת יה וישר' אומרים זה אלי ואנוהו משה אומר ד' איש מלחמה וישראל אומרים ד' שמו:

When we examine the last statement, we gather from it that under שמע פרס was understood a verse by verse recitation in which the reader and congregation alternated. The examples instanced would favour the presumption that the congregation joined in where the reader left off ($a < b$). But the expression משה פותח תחלה וישראל שהיה אומרין אחריו וגומרין makes it probable that the congregation repeated the half verse that the reader had already recited, and added to it the second half of the verse ($a < a + b$). This scheme finds exemplification, and at the same time strong support in the statement of the Mechilta¹; although Friedmann offered a wrong interpretation for it, he has supplied the right emendation of the text, which has since been confirmed by the newly discovered source of the *Mechilta* of R. Simon: ויאמרו לאמר ר' נחמיה אומר רוח הקדש שרת על ישראל ואמרו שירה כבני אדם שקורין את שמע אלעזר בן תראי אומר משה פותח ואומר אשירה לה' וישראל עונין אחריו וגומרין עמו סוס ורכבו

¹ *Mechilta*, ed. Friedmann, p. 35 a.

blessing; they assure him of their belief in the unity of God, whereat he blesses the Lord. I would hazard the assertion that this old Agada¹ is framed directly on the model observed daily in the divine service. Compare the simplest version in the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum to Deut. vi. 4:—

והוה כיון דמטא זימניה דיעקב אבונן למתכנשא מנו עלמא הוה מסתפי
דלמא אית בבנוי פסולא קרא יתהון ושיילינו דלמא אית בלבכון עקמונותא
אתיבו כלהון כהרא ואמרו ליה שמע ישראל אבונן ה' אלהנא ה' חד עני
(ed. Ginsburger, p. 313).

The authorities lay great importance on the saying of *softly*, and are at pains to account for the custom². The true grounds for it are so that an interruption should be avoided, and it is on this account that the Reader said the words in an undertone.

Should any doubts still present themselves, however, as to the meaning of *פרס על שמע* here given, they will entirely disappear when we take into consideration the opposite case. The Mišna knows of a manner of reciting the Shema called *כרך את שמע* that differs from the customary practice described above. *Pesahim*, IV, 8: ששה דברים עשו אנשי יריחו: . . . ואלו הן שלא מיהו בידם היו ובורכין את שמע *פרס* up the Shema" is a remarkable expression that like *פרס* seems to be borrowed from the dinner-table, which in its turn seems to have taken over these two metaphors from acts of dressing. But what in fact was the practice of the

¹ In the editions of the Talmud *Babli Pes.*, 56 a, it is given as כוררש ר' ; שמעון ב' לקיט ; but R. Hananel to this passage and *Shibbole ha-Leket*, XV (ed. Buber, p. 14) read ר' שמעון ב' פי. But this variation in the name does not make any material difference here, as the early date of this Agada is proved by the Sifre and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. In this point our explanation differs from that offered in the *Monatsschrift*, XXXV, 1886, p. 120, where the theory of the alternating recitation of the Shema is brought forward for the first time, in that there *כרך שמע* is taken as the response of the congregation.

² *Pesahim*, *ibid.* : החקין שידו אומרים אותו בחדשי. Cf. *Shibbole ha-Leket*, l. c.

people of Jericho is not clear, and the later Tannaim were no longer able to give any clear information on the question. כיצד היו כורכין את שמע אומרים שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד ולא היו מפסיקין דברי ר' מאיר ר' יהודה אומר מפסיקין היו אלא שלא היו אומרים ¹ ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד.

In the Jerusalem Talmud there are two differing commentaries on this controversy. According to the one, R. Meir was of opinion that in Jericho no pause was made between each word of the verse שמע ישראל, while R. Jehuda held that the necessary pause was made, but that ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו was not inserted. The second view understands R. Meir as maintaining that no interval was made between אחד and ברוך, whereas, according to R. Jehuda again, only ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו was omitted, but the pause (of course in this case between אחד and ואהבת) was made. Both versions are derived from a period in which the proceeding in question was no longer known, and therefore exhibit a confusion of elements of right and wrong. It may well be that R. Meir and R. Jehuda did not express themselves with certainty and complete accuracy, as in all probability they were both aiming at explaining one and the same fact, but from different points of view. For in contrast to the general custom of an alternating recitation of the Shema, it was the custom in Jericho to recite it "wrapped up," i. e. the reader read the *whole* section without interruption, while the congregation said it quietly with him. Naturally in this case there was no opportunity to insert ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו, and whereas R. Jehuda knew that this sentence was omitted in Jericho, R. Meir had heard that they did not there "interrupt," by which was meant that the reader did not pause to let the congregation take up the reading. In course of time the custom of Jericho became the general one, but with the retention of the sentence ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו, and it is therefore that the old notice and the controversy of the Tannaim were unintelligible. For this reason also

¹ *Tos. Pesahim*, II, 19 (160); *Jer.* iv. 9 (31 b); *Babli*, 56 a.

the word מפסיקין was given the meaning of "to make a pause"—a meaning that it did not originally bear¹.

The recitation of the Shema and the blessings accompanying it took place in the following manner: a member of the congregation intoned the prayer from his place², standing or sitting³, and the congregation joined in. The President, ראש הכנסה, called upon one of the assembled congregation and charged him with this office of honour in the service; פרום על שמע was the invitation given to Eleasar Hisma. It was not easy to comply with this request: not every one possessed the necessary knowledge and requisite skill, and not every one could command sufficient self-possession. The prayers were recited from memory, without the aid of any written text; and even the three biblical sections that make up the Shema were not read in the service, although the rule⁴ that one must recite "scripture" only with the book before one in general held good. In the analogous case where the Maamadot were allowed to recite the first chapter of Genesis from

¹ The explanation of the sentence ברוך שכל"ז offered by Friedmann, *Sifre*, l. c., and Büchler, *Die Priester und der Cultus*, &c., 1895, p. 167 ff., has only complicated the matter by quite unnecessarily drawing into it political questions. The meaning and origin of the eulogy are rightly explained by Blau, *R. E. J.*, XXXI, p. 189, although many of the hypotheses there made are hardly capable of proof. Our explanation accounts for everything simply, from the liturgical standpoint, and at the same time from the analogy of the related Midrash of Jacob and his sons. To the further question why it was just in Jericho that this variation in custom obtained, we can give no clear answer. Probably it was not peculiar to Jericho alone, and in the course of time it became the general custom.

² The פוחה, raggedly dressed, was allowed to perform no part of the service but this (*Meg.*, IV, 6), for in all others he would have to leave his place, and would thus have to stand in a prominent position before the congregation unworthily clad.

³ Cf. *Genes. Rab.*, sect. 48: וקורין קריאת שמע והן יושבין לכבודי ואני על גבן. More striking is *Pesikta* שיר, ed. Buber, 77 a: כך אמר הקב"ה: א"ר ברכיה . . . כך אמר הקב"ה: לא השרחת עליכם, ולא אמרת ליכם שהיה קורין אותה לא עומרין על רגליכם, ולא פורעין את ראשיכם, אלא בשבתך בביתך . . .

⁴ דברים שבכתב א"א ראשי לאמרן ב"ג"ש, *Gittin*, 60 a. Cf. Müller, *Briefe und Responsen in der vorgaonäischen jüdischen Literatur*, Note 23.

memory, the expression used is וקורין על פיהן בקורין את שמע (*Taanith*, IV, 3).

The invitation to officiate as פורם על שמע could cause embarrassment to many, as even Eleasar Hisma had to refuse as he was not able to comply with the request. The congregation too had to be protected against any one being able to force himself forward for the honour, and to be ensured that he who was delegated for the honour could offer a guarantee that he possessed the requisite capacity. If this be the case, we find the key for solving a riddle that for centuries has been awaiting its solution.

המפטיר בנביא הוא פורם על שמע, says the Mišna. What have Haftara and Shema to do with each other? Further, why is the earlier act in the service made dependent upon the later? Was it then from the outset determined who was to say the Haftara? The notice in Luke iv. 16 ff. does not give the impression of the reading of the Haftara having been dependent on any other act, and we have not the least right to mistrust this point in the description of the Evangelist. In consequence of these difficulties, there arose the view of *Sof^{er}im*, XIV, 8: המפטיר בנביא הוא פורם על שמע באיזה שמע אמרו. בשמע של ספר תורה. That may well have been the case in later practice; but the Mišna does not know of any such ceremonious taking out of the Torah—cf. *Yoma*, VII, 1, *Sota*, VII, 7, 8—and moreover employs the term פורם על שמע only in reference to the first part of the morning prayers. According to the Talmud it is usual to perceive a compensation for the Maftir in the connection of the two functions. For it was the custom that only children read the Haftarah, and if an adult on occasion agreed to do it, he received compensation by being entrusted with the office of reader as well. But this explanation is impossible. Apart from other difficulties, the latter part of the sentence ואם היה קטן אביו is in direct contradiction with this view. If it was customary for children to read the Haftara, it was unnecessary to offer any compensation, as it was

honour enough to be allowed to read from the prophets in public. Finally, the custom of children reading the Haftara is not established for olden times, and it would be difficult to show that the teaching of boys in general rendered them so competent. The Prophets did not belong to the run of subjects generally taught; the knowledge of them was by no means widely spread, and the ordinary man could scarcely read them fluently. Therefore any one conversant with the Prophets could be presupposed to possess a measure of familiarity with religious matters, and could be credited with a knowledge of the prayers.

Thus in the sentence *המפטר בנביא הוא פורס על שמע*, we have hardly to see a law so much as a direction: "It may confidently be permitted to any one capable of reading the prophets to act as reader of the Shema." Should he be under age, however, it is not in keeping with the honour of the congregation that he should himself officiate; but the persons to whom he is indebted for his knowledge, his father—in the earliest times the teacher of his children—or his teacher, takes his place; one can with certainty presuppose in them the knowledge needful for a reader.

The Jewish synagogue service had a thoroughly democratic constitution; in it no one held a specially privileged position; neither birth nor station conferred any prerogatives—with the exception of the blessing of the priests; capacity and willingness alone were the factors which determined whether any one should undertake this or that office. But the congregation had to be protected against its liberality being abused by such of its members as were too greedy of honour. Nevertheless it happened often enough that the reader was guilty of incorrect reading, and the Mišna contains a number of regulations for the reader who makes a mistake in the prayers.

I. ELBOGEN.

(To be continued.)